

Be Recognised



29 May 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Dharawal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this event is being held. We would like to pay our respect to the Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People present this evening.



Title: Ceremonies

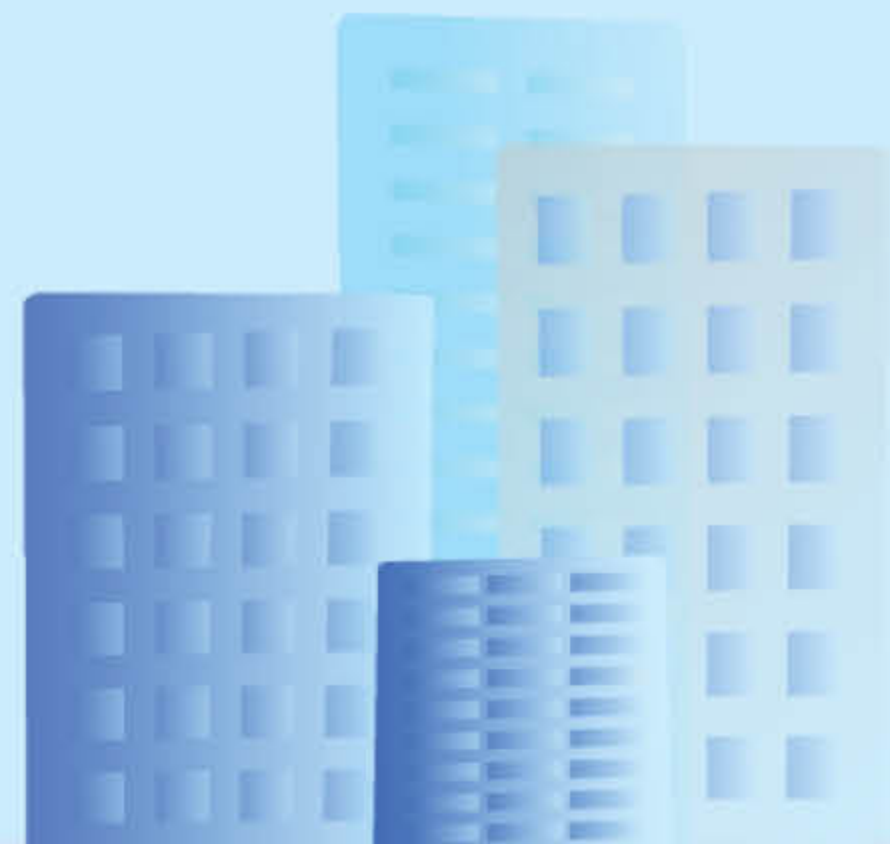
Artist: WUPA Artist - Craig Layer

The main circle in the centre represents the Jobs Together Program and like an important meeting place draws others to it. The circles attached to it are other support mechanisms associated with the program such as our communities and Aboriginal mentors.

The three symbols above and below the main circle represent our elders and their cultural knowledge and how important it is that Aboriginal culture be central to the success of the Jobs Together Program.

The three dotted lines going into and coming out from the circles represents both the journey taken by Aboriginal people as they endeavour to find education and employment pathways as well as being a threefold cord that is hard to break and symbolises the strength that comes from having Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal working collaboratively together.

Thank you to our 2026 State Sponsors



Diamond Sponsor



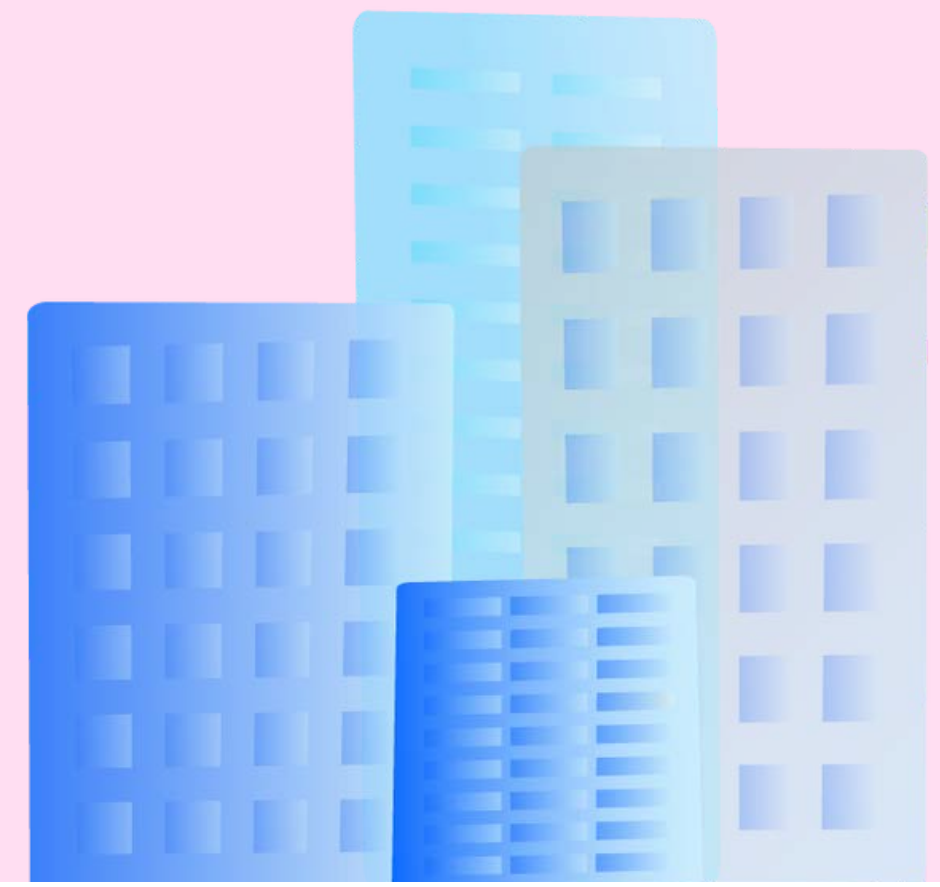
Platinum Sponsor



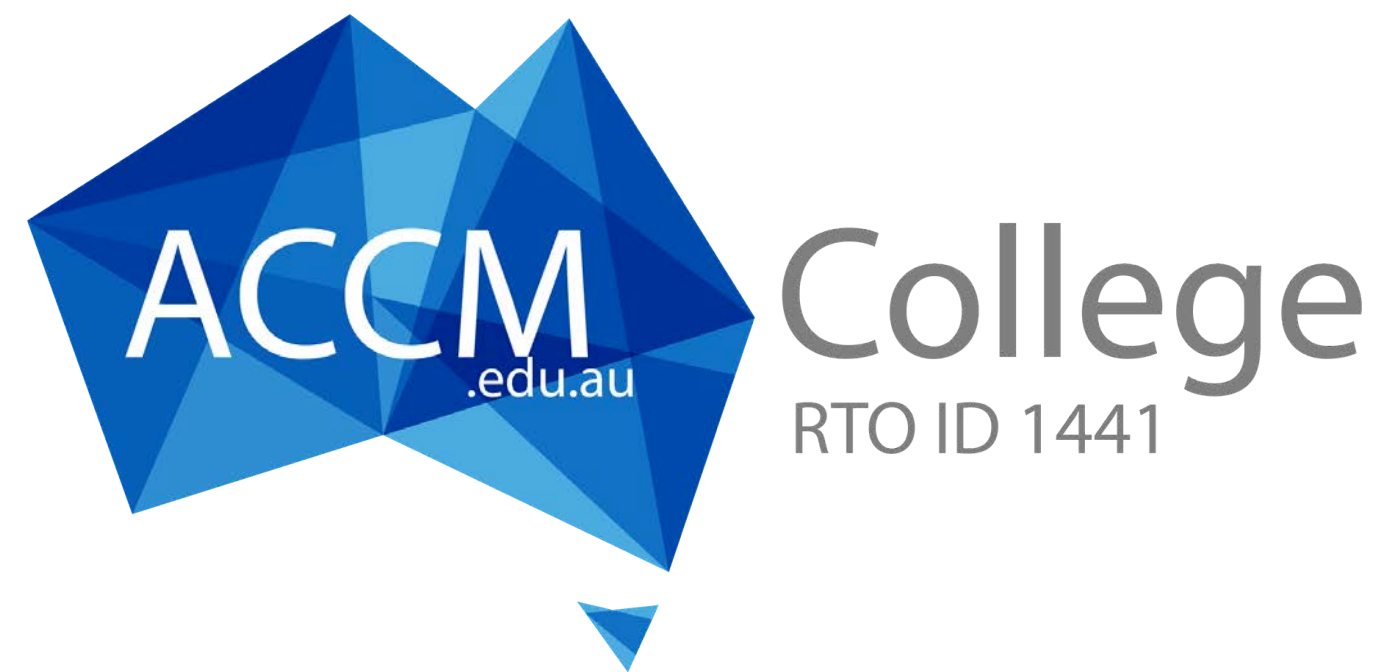
Gold Sponsors



Thank you to our 2026 Regional Sponsors



Gold Sponsor



Silver Sponsors

NSW
Training
Awards

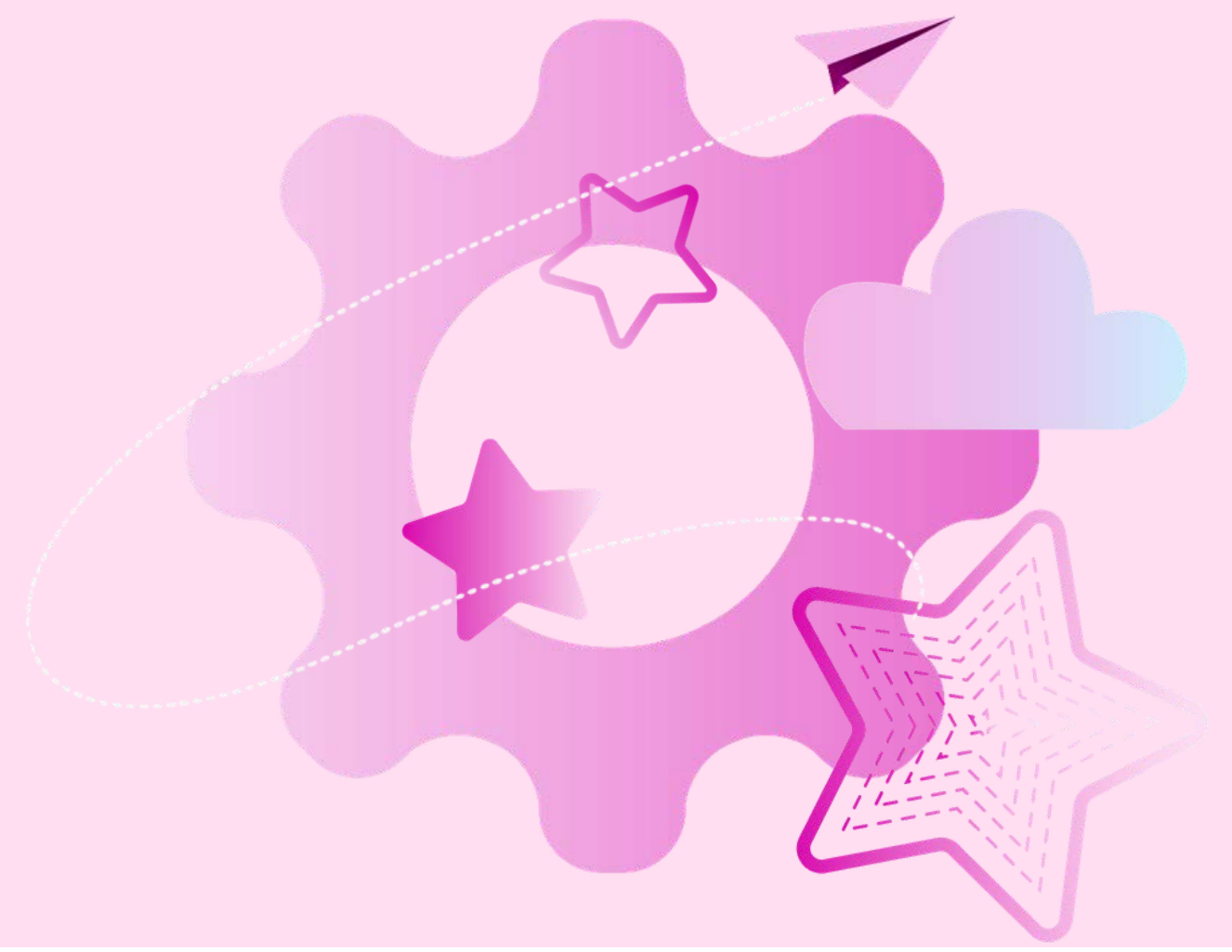
1300 apprentice



Bronze Sponsors



Order Of Proceedings



Welcome to Country

Talarah Bull and Uncle Dale Wright

Master of Ceremonies Introduction

Xavier Jeremijenko

2024 Illawarra & South East NSW

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year

Michael Pfeffer

2024 NSW VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year

Lane Williams

2025 Illawarra & South East NSW

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander

Student of the Year Finalist

Welcome Address

Anna Watson MP

Member for Shellharbour

Award Categories

- Vocational Student of the Year
- VET Trainer/Teacher of the Year
- VET in Schools Student of the Year
- School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year
- Trainee of the Year
- Apprentice of the Year



Message from the Regional Manager



Illawarra & South East NSW

Welcome to the 2026 Illawarra & South East NSW Training Awards.

We are delighted to have you join us for this special ‘red carpet’ event, celebrating excellence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) across our region. Tonight shines a spotlight on the exceptional skills, achievements and dedication of our finalists, the very best of the best in VET.

This event is a proud opportunity to showcase the strength, talent and impact of the VET sector within the Illawarra and Southeast NSW community.

We extend our sincere thanks to the State and Regional Training Awards teams for their commitment to recognising excellence, and to our valued sponsors for their ongoing support of this event and the wider region.

We also acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who have supported our nominees and finalists on their journey, including parents, carers, Registered Training Organisations, Group Training Organisations, employers, host organisations, schools, mentors and other key supporters.

Finally, we recognise the Illawarra Training Services team for their ongoing work supporting learners, employers and educators, and helping to build strong and successful training pathways.

Congratulations to all our Regional Finalists. We hope you enjoy celebrating your achievements with us.

Kamila Wilk

Illawarra & South East NSW Regional Manager
Regional Training Services

Meet Our Masters of Ceremonies

Helping us celebrate tonight are our fantastic Master of Ceremonies—passionate ambassadors for Vocational Education and Training. Having undertaken their own VET journey, they embody the transformative power of vocational education and are proud representatives of its impact.



Xavier Jeremijenko

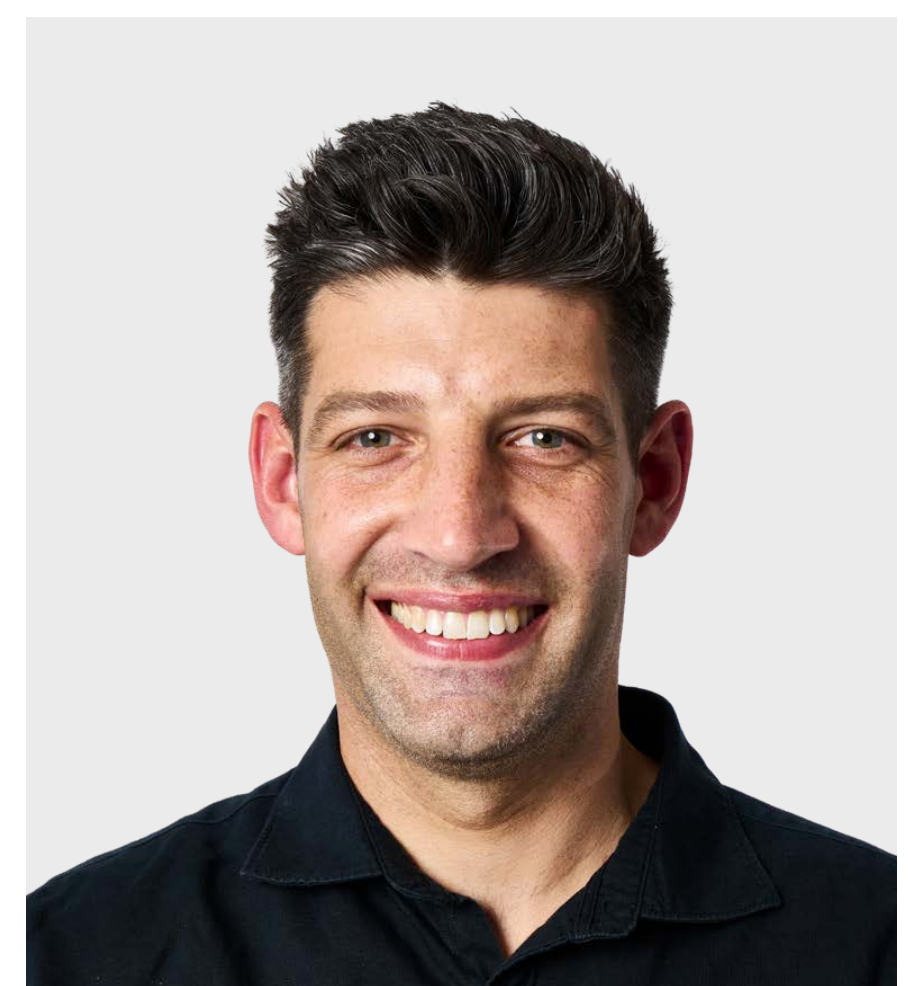
Xavier is a Training Awards Alumni, current VET Ambassador, and a fulltime apprentice.

He was recognised in 2024 for his dedication to his studies and his community and has since continued along his vocational pathway while also sharing his journey with students at schools across the state. As Keira High's former vice-captain, Xavier has taken his work ethic, curiosity, and willingness to help others out into the world and is excelling in his career.

Michael Pfeffer

Leveraging his previous career as a chef, Michael Pfeffer is dedicated to empowering budding hospitality stars in his charge.

Grounding his teaching style in practical application, Michael has managed to ignite his students' passion for the industry – one that mirrors his own. His success as a Hospitality educator partly comes down to his comprehensive CV. He worked in fine-dining restaurants, cafés and hotels for 10 years before gaining a Bachelor of Education Technology and Applied Studies at university.



Described by his colleagues at Dapto High School as a beacon of positivity and encouragement, Michael's ability to inspire can also be attributed to a passion for what he does. But it's his readiness to prioritise real-world learning that sees Michael exceed expectations. He's established a cafe in the school grounds for his students to learn in, led the NSW WorldSkills Commercial Cookery team in 2023, took out 2024 NSW VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year and incorporates excursions, industry speakers and interactive components to his teaching wherever possible.

Meet Our Masters of Ceremonies

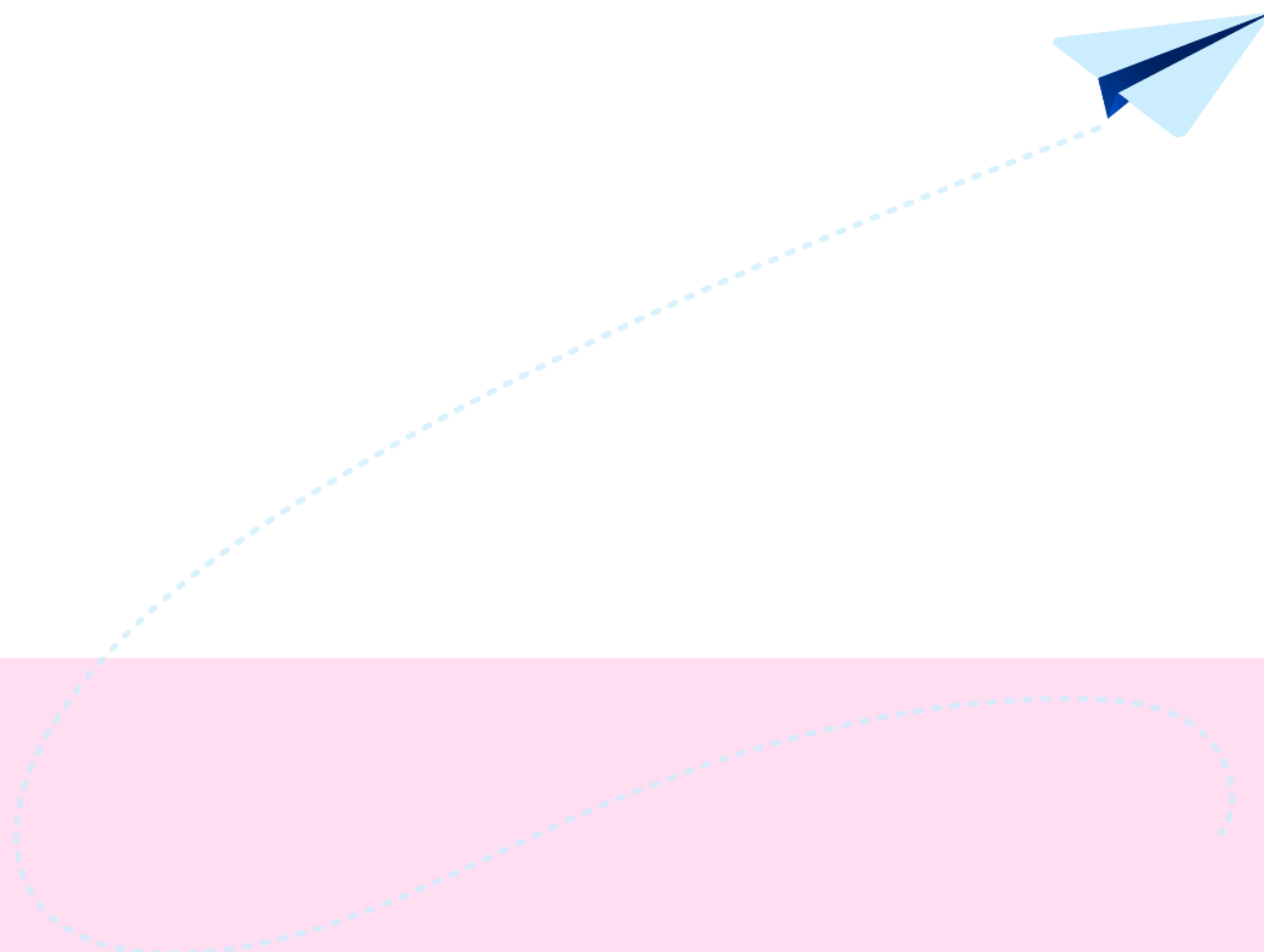


Lane Williams

Lane Williams has pursued his lifelong passion for filmmaking through a school-based traineeship in Screen and Media. He's gained a nationally recognised qualification while getting a head start in the industry while completing his HSC.

His work with Hill to Air has provided invaluable insights into the filmmaking process and the intricacies of running a successful business. As a co-founder of a production company, Lane has had used his pathway as an opportunity to collaborate with talented professionals and gain relevant experience through exciting projects, including filming for the NBL and an upcoming Bollywood movie.

In addition to his filmmaking pursuits, Lane is committed to mentoring others and uplifting his community. From operating a local business, to co-leading a men's mentoring program in schools, Lane is an advocate for mental health awareness and inclusivity. His journey exemplifies his dedication to the arts and the limitless possibilities available through VET.





**Australian
College**
of Commerce & Management

*Congratulations
& Good Luck*

to all finalists

ACCM is a proud supporter of the 2026 Illawarra
& South East NSW Regional Training Awards

Learn more at
www.accm.edu.au



If you want to study, we want to help

RTO ID: 1441

ACCM College has been a leader in distance education across our entire 30 years of operation, training nearly 60,000 students and trainees nationally. Our team of talented trainers use their first-hand industry experience and expertise to help our learners start or advance their careers in Business, Leadership, Finance, Information Technology and Supply Chain industries.

Capitalising on our internally developed learning platform Webclass, ACCM has used our experience in distance education to create learning programs that maximise the flexibility and strength of online learning.

While state of the art technology and high-quality learning and assessment materials create a powerful foundation for our students, it is the ongoing dedication and proactive support of our 40 trainers and support team that help ensure our students achieve their goals and gain the most from their VET journey.



@1300apprentice

Invest in an apprentice and help close the gaps on industry labour & skills shortages.

With the right training, apprentices can become wise investments for your business & the future of your industry. **Talk to 1300apprentice today.**

1300apprentice



Congratulations to all finalists

The Illawarra Vocational Training
Committee would like to congratulate
all the finalists from the
Illawarra & South East NSW Region.

IVTC is proud to be the sponsor of the

Dot Hennessy Award



Congratulations

TO ALL 2026 REGIONAL FINALISTS

WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF
LUCK



WE CREATE **SUCCESS** STORIES

As experts in vocational education and training, Zeal Futures provides customised apprenticeship and traineeship programs to help employers meet their workforce needs.

What we offer:

- Group Training - Apprentices, Trainees, SBATs
- Registered Training Organisation (RTO 90304)
- Managed Placement Services
- Special Assistance School

Grow your team with Zeal Futures.

zealfutures.com.au | 1800 247 864





Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Katherine Hines

Qualification

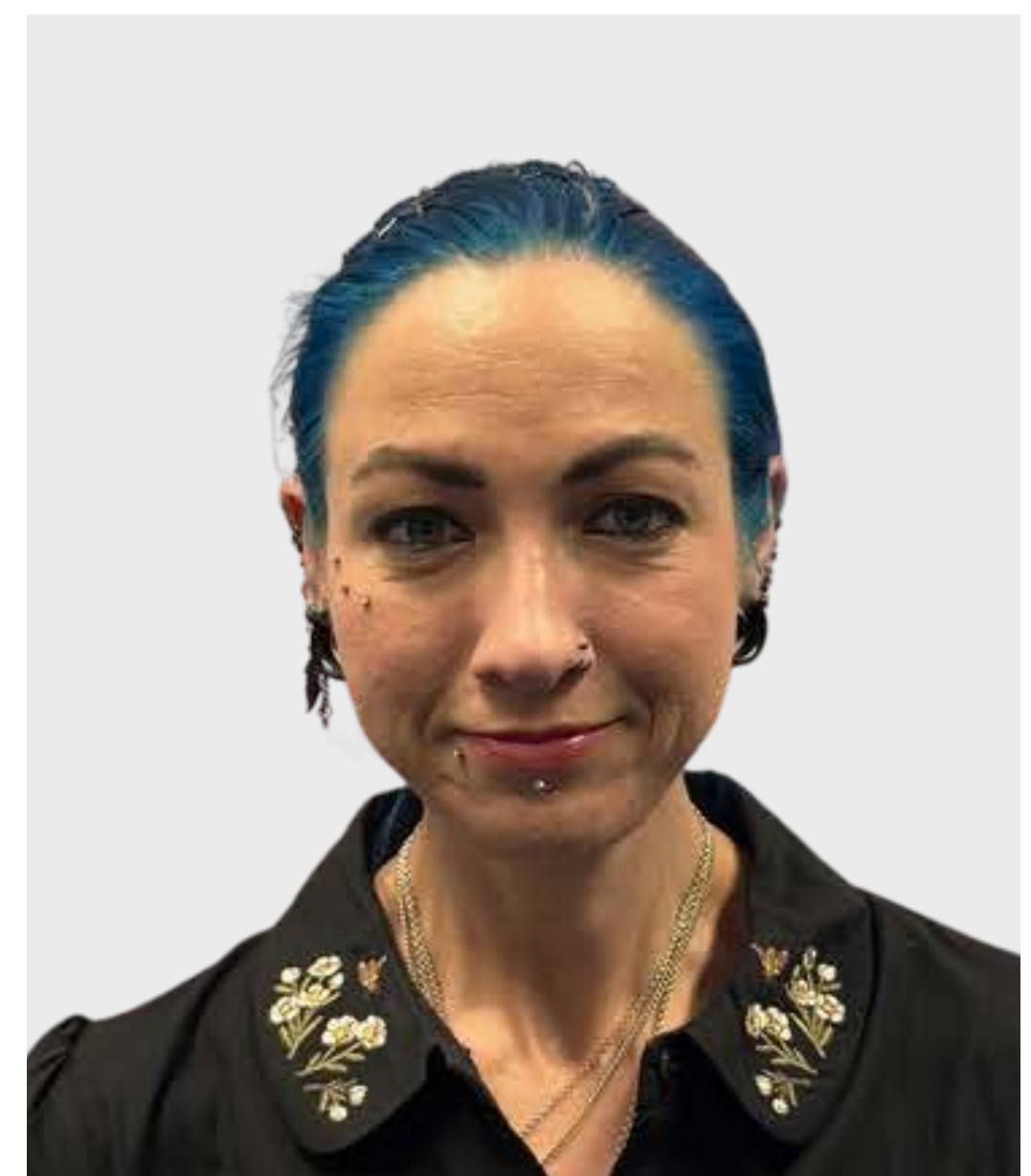
Diploma of Nursing

Training Provider

UOW College Australia

Employer

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District



Katherine Hines embodies the core values of healthcare and vocational education with her passion, professionalism, and unwavering dedication.

Katherine's pathway into healthcare was not traditional. Leaving school at the age of 14, she faced early life trauma and negative influences that led to difficult choices in her younger years. However, Katherine made a deliberate decision to change direction and build a meaningful, stable future through education and service-based work.

Katherine completed her Diploma of Nursing through UOW College Australia. She is now employed at Wollongong Hospital in the Renal Ward, while simultaneously progressing into the Bachelor of Nursing at the University of Wollongong, continuing her journey toward becoming a Registered Nurse.

Through resilience, determination, and a deep commitment to caring for others, Katherine has transformed her life and become a remarkable example of what vocational education can achieve.

Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Evelyn Moreno



Qualification

Certificate III in Fitness

Training Provider

UOW College Australia

Employer

Fernwood Womens Health Club

Evelyn Munro had a successful career as a senior technology leader but chose to follow her passion for health and community wellbeing by changing careers. She completed a Certificate III in Fitness at the University of Wollongong College Australia.

During her studies, Evelyn showed great involvement, leadership, and creativity. She created technology systems to track student fitness tests and results, helping current students and graduates.

Evelyn cares deeply about helping people stay healthy and active. She believes that movement helps people keep their dignity, independence, and quality of life as they get older.

One project she is very proud of is a men's strength training program in Gerringong for men over 70. With over 30 participants who train together regularly, forming strong friendships and support networks, this program shows how fitness can fight isolation and improve health.

Her story inspires others to consider vocational education at any age.



Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Nardia Reid

Qualification

Certificate III in Individual Support

Training Provider

ARC Training

Employer

The Disability Trust



Nardia Reid is a young and inspiring leader in the disability sector. At 20 years old, she has shown great dedication to helping people with disabilities through her work and personal efforts.

While working on the frontline with The Disability Trust, Nardia completed a Certificate III in Individualised Support with ARC Training. This course improved her skills to provide safe, high-quality, person-focused support and helped her understand the best ways to work in the disability sector. Nardia believes in learning and inclusion. She shares what she knows with her coworkers and encourages them to keep learning.

Her kindness also shows at home. She helps her brother, who has cerebral palsy, to become more independent by supporting him with his driving practice.

Due to her leadership, curiosity, and real passion to help others, Nardia is a strong advocate for vocational education and training and the disability sector.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Rouaa Altinawi



Field Of Study

Real Estate

Employer

Entry Education

Roua Altinawi migrated to Australia at the age of 13 unable to speak English. She is now a passionate real estate trainer who champions student success and is a testament to her resilience and dedication. Working in real estate at 18 while completing her vocational training, Rouaa discovered her true calling wasn't just working in the industry — it was teaching and helping others succeed.

With a commitment to mentoring, particularly influenced by her own experiences, Rouaa found power in sharing her story and supporting others through her time volunteering and coaching. Now a real estate trainer for one year, she has made a significant impact by introducing competency check calls — brief but essential conversations to confirm student identity and progress.

Her ongoing dedication to student success and industry engagement is reflected in regular open home events and continuous VET training.

Through her determination and supportive approach, Rouaa is empowering the next generation of real estate professionals.



VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Carol Hicklenton

Field Of Study

Business

Employer

BSI Learning



Carol Hicklenton brings a unique and inspiring approach to vocational education and training, shaped by a diverse background in environmental education and project management within State and Local government. Completing a doctorate in 2016, her journey into VET was unexpected, yet transformative, guided by a philosophy that places students at the centre of their own learning journey.

Working with up to 90 students, primarily within correctional facilities, Carol fosters a student-driven environment where autonomy, competence, and belonging are more than just concepts — they are lived experiences. Her work with incarcerated learners has been life-changing, both for the students and herself.

Carol's impact as a trainer is captured in the words of one student who said, "I've learnt to read in jail," a testament to her commitment to changing lives one learner at a time. Her passion shines through every aspect of her work — reshaping education behind bars into a place of growth, dignity, and hope.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Wyn Jenkins



Field Of Study

Safety and Emergency Response

Employer

Risk Response and Rescue

After a decorated career as an operational firefighter in the UK, Wyn Jenkins now has 20 years of experience as a VET Trainer under his belt. Having witnessed too many workplace accidents, Wyn is passionate about sharing his knowledge at Risk Response and Rescue to help workers understand the hazards and risks they face every day. His goal is to make safety and working safely a natural part of workplace culture.

Wyn believes complacency about safety is a major issue, so he uses practical training and various learning activities to show workers that safety training can be engaging and positive. He has been involved in significant projects such as the Snowy Hydro project, where he trained workers and promoted high safety standards.

Wyn's knowledge for safety combined with a passion for VET make him an excellent advocate for not only WHS but also ensuring workers return home safely from work.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Cooper Alcock

Qualification

Certificate III in Tourism

Training Provider

Independent Schools NSW

School

Sapphire Coast Anglican College



Cooper Alcock has shown great passion and dedication in his Certificate III in Tourism. His love for travel and curiosity about the behind-the-scenes work in tourism has driven him to pursue this career path. Despite the challenges of living remotely and managing a heavy workload of assignments, Cooper developed strong time management skills to meet deadlines and successfully complete his studies.

Cooper completed two valuable work placements, where he applied the skills and knowledge gained from his training, preparing him well for a future in tourism. His commitment and enthusiasm were evident when he was invited to speak at a Year 10 presentation, sharing his journey and inspiring others.

Looking ahead, Cooper hopes to build a career with National Parks, driven by the important foundation his vocational studies have provided. His achievements reflect not only his talent but also his resilience and readiness to succeed in the tourism industry.

VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Mia Edwards



Qualification

Certificate II in Agriculture

Training Provider

NSW Department of Education

School

Bomaderry High School

Mia has demonstrated great commitment and enthusiasm throughout her Certificate II in Agriculture as part of the Primary Industries course. Despite challenges with limited internet access in Bomaderry, Mia adapted by focusing on practical activities that enriched their learning experience.

The hands-on experience including work placements have given her real-life experience, practical skills, and a deeper understanding of the industry beyond traditional classroom learning.

Mia's passion and responsibility have led her to secure a farm job, where she continues to thrive in a hardworking, fun, team setting, like competing at cattle shows and working collaboratively on the dairy farm. Through these experiences, Mia has developed resilience, life skills, and strong connections within the agricultural community.

Her respectful and creative approach to learning, coupled with her ability to support and engage with her peers, highlights Mia as a dedicated young professional ready to succeed in the agriculture industry.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Annabelle Paull

Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and

Goulburn Education Ltd

School

Carroll College



Annabelle Paull is a dedicated student at Carroll College who has combined her HSC and ATAR pathway with Vocational Education and Training to gain practical skills and real-world experience through her Certificate III in.

Through hands on learning and work placement, Annabelle gained insight into how organisations operate, communicate and collaborate in professional environments.

Annabelle enjoys gaining real-world experience through hands-on work placements, describing it as the “key to everything.” She also values learning about different workplace dynamics and advocates that “volunteering should be embedded in the curriculum.” As College Captain, Annabelle is known for her kindness, confidence and strong communication skills. She encourages younger students to consider VET, highlighting the opportunities it provides and the importance of balancing study, work and personal commitments. Aspiring to become a teacher, Annabelle believes her VET experience has helped build the communication, confidence and practical skills that will support her future career.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Lara Hanger



Qualification

Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance

Training Provider

UNE Partnerships

Employer

Goulburn Physiotherapy Centre

School

Mulwaree High School

Lara Hanger is a dedicated and enthusiastic school-based trainee who balances her Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance studies with work at Goulburn Physiotherapy Centre. Passionate about injury prevention and promoting strength and balance, particularly for older adults, in building confidence and independence and helping them with everyday activities like walking into town. At work, Lara witnesses firsthand the positive impact on people's quality of life, often seeing client's multiple times a week and forming meaningful bonds.

Lara encourages others to find their passion and explore School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities, highlighting how such experiences open doors to employment and growth even while still attending school. Despite working three days a week, Lara continues to excel academically at Mulwaree High School, consistently achieving her goals.

Her journey and enthusiastic attitude exemplify the benefits of practical learning, commitment, and passion, making her a strong role model for others following in her footsteps.



School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Annie-Maree Martin

Qualification

Certificate III in Agriculture

Training Provider

Australian Training Company

Employer

Australian Training Company

Host Employer

Tinker Valley Farm

School

Ulladulla High School



Eager to commence a Certificate III in Agriculture, but unable to find a training provider locally, Annie-Marie showcased advanced initiative during a chance conversation with Australian Training Company, at a careers event. Her go-getter attitude resulted in Annie-Marie commencing a school-based traineeship and being contracted in the Northern Territory for a month to complete her practical component of her study.

At 12 years old selling produce to local cafés with her brothers, Annie-Marie has always been extremely passionate about agriculture and the farming industry, giving her an edge to pursue a career post school, and is already receiving job offers.

Annie-Marie is also a proud Aboriginal woman who stays culturally grounded and connected through school and community events. Encouraging other young Aboriginal students to explore VET as a potential career pathway, makes Annie-Marie not only a leader at Ulladulla High School as school captain but also a leader in her community.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Sophie Minos



Qualification

Certificate III in Real Estate Practice

Training Provider

Real Estate Institute of New South Wales

Employer

Raine & Horne Mollymook/Milton

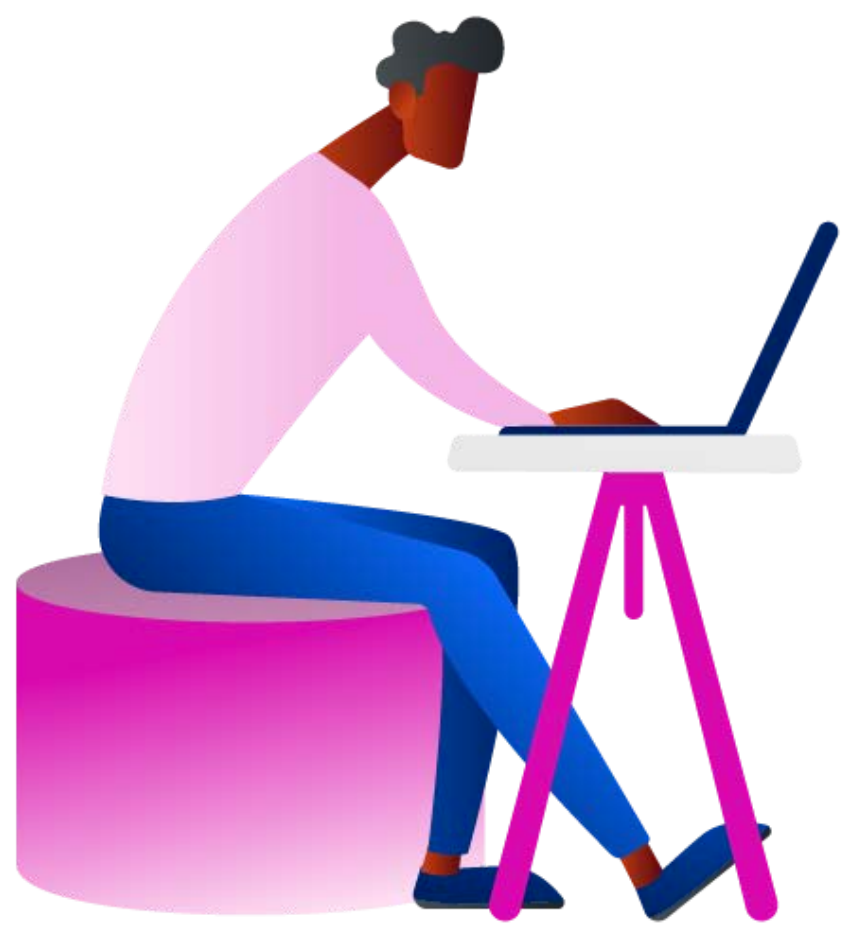
School

Ulladulla High School

Sophie Minos is a trailblazing student from Ulladulla High School. Her self-driven approach allowed her to explore hospitality and business ownership before discovering a passion for real estate, leading to a school-based traineeship studying Certificate III in Real Estate Practice with Raine & Horne Mollymook/Milton.

Balancing school and her school-based traineeship two days a week, through The Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, Sophie has stayed ahead academically and has already been offered a full-time job once she graduates school. She's deeply connected to her community, volunteering locally and participating in Milton entertainment events that support charities. Inspired by the Lions Club, Sophie will also volunteer in Vietnam this year, promoting intergenerational learning and giving back.

Despite certain challenges, Sophie's persistence and adaptability have shaped her as a role model for other students, proving the value of personalised learning and community engagement.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Jack Carlson

Qualification

Certificate III in Mobile Plant Technology

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

PPK Mining Equipment



Jack Carlson started his apprenticeship at 16, working alongside much older, experienced tradespeople. This helped him grow quickly, gaining resilience, independence, and problem-solving skills. He trained through TAFE NSW, balancing study and hands-on work, and completed his apprenticeship with PPK Mining Equipment.

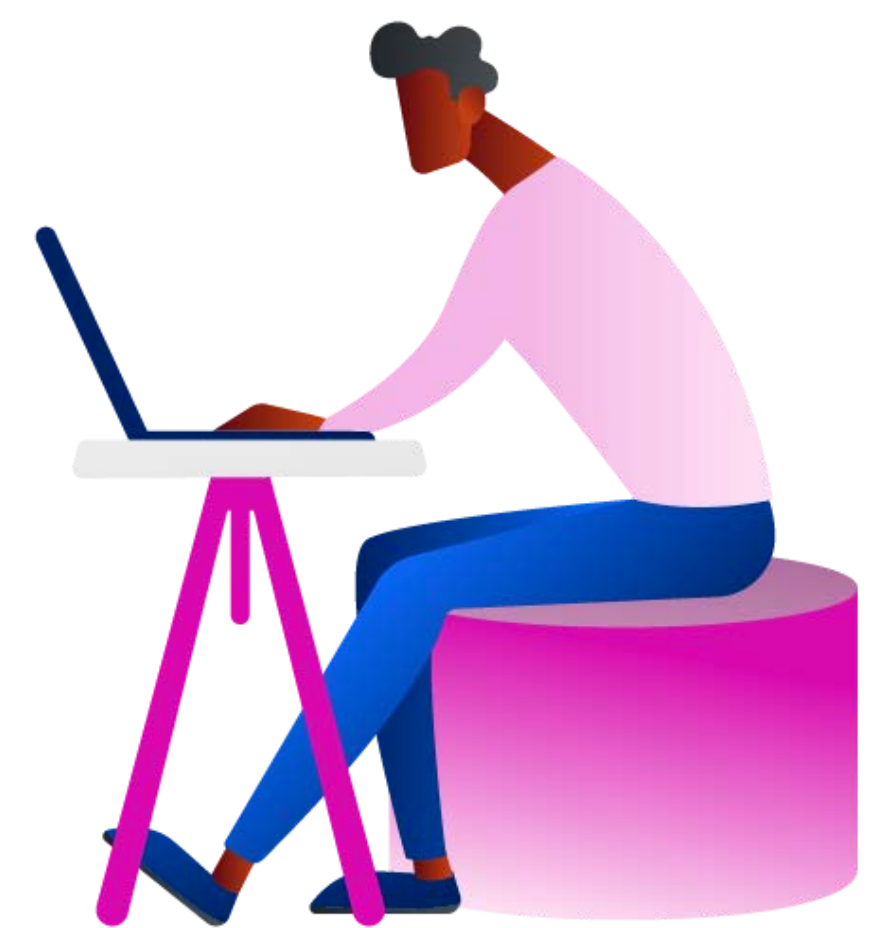
Jack works on maintaining and repairing large mining machinery and is passionate about the mining industry's role in supporting communities and the economy. He plans to earn more qualifications and hopes to work underground someday.

Outside of work, Jack is a competitive boxer who travels internationally. He also mentors young Aboriginal kids in boxing, teaching discipline, respect, and confidence to inspire them to stay active and proud of their culture.

Jack believes vocational education offers great career opportunities and says trades can lead to long-term job security and personal growth, emphasising that university isn't the only path to success.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Blake Hart



Qualification

Certificate III in Sport Coaching

Training Provider

NSW Department of Education

Employer

Australian Training Company

Host Employer

St George Illawarra Dragons

School

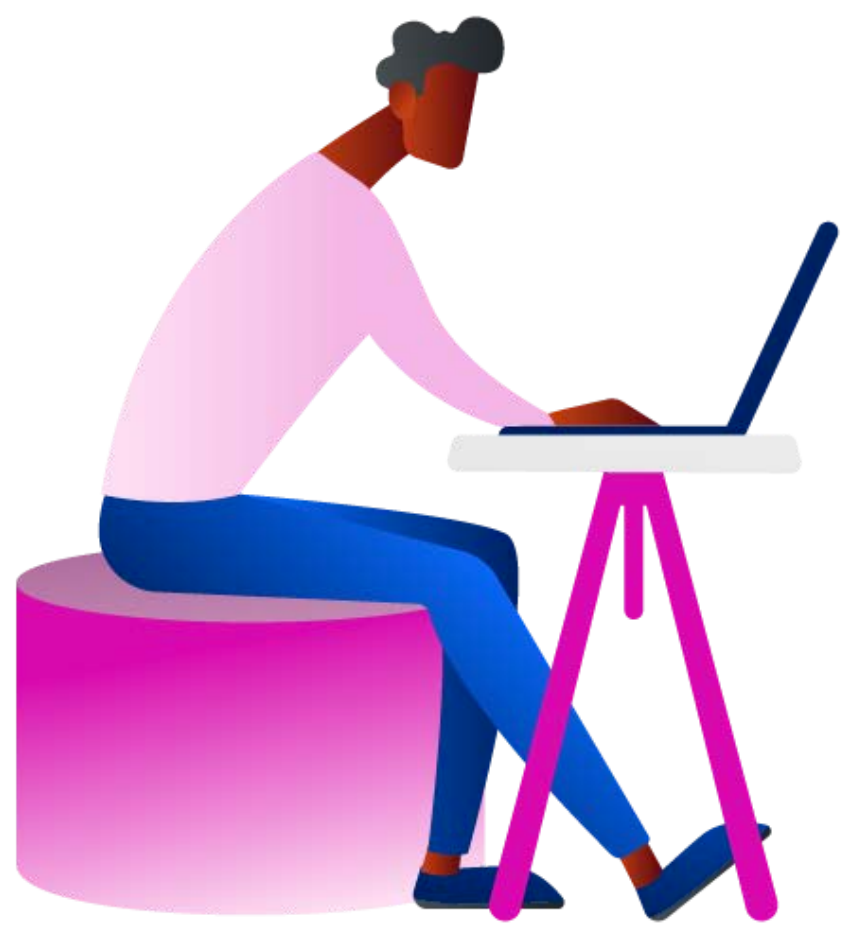
Kanahooka High School

Proud Gandangara man, Blake Hart, is building a strong future through his Certificate III in Sport Coaching School-based Traineeship (SbAT) with Australian Training Company, in partnership with the St George Illawarra Dragons. Selected from a large pool of applicants, he earned one of the most competitive trainee positions linked to the Dragons program.

Blake is deeply involved in community engagement, working with young students, running workshops and activities that promote participation, confidence, and connection. He is passionate about ensuring Koori kids feel included and have equal opportunities.

He volunteers with the Illawarra Deadly Runners, participates in NAIDOC Week (performing Yidaki and traditional dance), and represented the Dragons at the Indigenous Youth Summit.

Blake aims to become a sports physiotherapist and continue to support his community. He is committed to raising awareness of programs like SbATs so more young people can access similar opportunities, encouraging others to get involved and support those in need.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Bahlie Smith

Qualification

Certificate II in Animal Care

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Ulladulla Veterinary Hospital

School

Ulladulla High School



Bahlie, a proud Wiradjuri woman from Ulladulla, is making a positive impact in her community and the animal care industry at just 16. She is completing Year 12 at Ulladulla High School while studying Certificate II in Animal Care through TAFE NSW. Bahlie works as an assistant at Ulladulla Veterinary Hospital, gaining valuable hands-on experience.

Passionate about animal welfare, she founded Paws for Cause, a charity helping families afford essential veterinary care. Bahlie is also committed to improving mental health awareness within the veterinary profession, an area known to experience high levels of stress and burnout. She hopes to contribute to reducing suicide and mental health challenges in the profession by advocating for greater awareness, support and wellbeing for veterinary professionals

After school, she plans to study veterinary science in Wagga Wagga, aiming to become an equine veterinarian and open her own clinic. Bahlie hopes her journey inspires others to follow their passions and create positive change.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Sarah Blair



Qualification

Diploma of Community Services

Training Provider

h&h Accredited Training Pty Ltd

Employer

Department of Communities and Justice

Sarah completed a Diploma of Community Services through h&h Accredited Training Pty Ltd while working as a trainee with the Department of Communities and Justice. She chose this field because it aligns with her values of empathy, accountability, and social justice, offering meaningful opportunities to create positive change.

Sarah's qualification included both theoretical and practical workplace experience, enabling her to apply trauma-informed, ethical, and culturally responsive practices in real-life situations, both in her personal and work life. Active in her community, Sarah contributes to the Southern Region Aboriginal Reference Group and serves as a Health and Safety Representative at Nowra Community Corrections. Beyond work, she is involved in sporting groups with her children and assists with community events, reinforcing her commitment to the community services industry.

Passionate about supporting people through challenges and contributing to safer, stronger communities, Sarah is motivated by creating meaningful impact and is committed to building a career grounded in service, accountability and care.



Trainee of the Year Finalist

Blake Dickenson

Qualification

Diploma of Surveying

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Zeal Futures

Host Employer

Shoalhaven City Council



Blake completed a Certificate II in Water Operations through a traineeship and enjoyed learning both on and off the job. Unsure about his career path, he took another traineeship with Zeal Futures in Certificate III in Surveying & Spatial Information at Shoalhaven City Council, progressing to a Certificate IV and then a Diploma of Surveying.

Through hard work and persistence, Blake has become a vital member of the Shoalhaven City Council team. He now leads infrastructure projects, coordinates contractors, orders materials, provides drawing files, and oversees contractor safety.

His traineeship experiences have been valuable for his personal growth. Completing these qualifications boosted his confidence, interpersonal, leadership, numerical, and computer skills, setting him on the right career path. Blake continues to learn about new industry technologies and is considering pursuing a university degree.

Blake's journey highlights the value of the vocational education and training pathway, showing how progression from Certificate II to Diploma can lead to a rewarding career.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Grace McLeod



Qualification

Diploma of School Age Education and Care

Training Provider

ECTARC

Employer

Peak Sports and Learning

Grace is dedicated to supporting children's development and wellbeing. She completed a Diploma of School Age Education and Care through ECTARC, via a traineeship with Peak Sport and Learning. This experience deepened her knowledge of child development, wellbeing, and inclusive practices, while boosting her confidence in building positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues.

During her traineeship, Grace enhanced her communication, leadership, mentoring, behaviour management and program design skills, improving the quality of care and teamwork. Her key achievements include leading engaging programs for children of various ages and abilities, mentoring new educators, introducing wellbeing initiatives, and advancing from Educator to Responsible Person, now serving as a Service Support Manager.

Passionate about the industry, Grace recognises it as undervalued but full of excellent career opportunities. She embraced the vocational education and training pathway, gained qualifications, and progressed through various roles to now manage 10 centres.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Cameron Johnson

Qualification

Certificate III in ESI - Distribution Overhead

Training Provider

Essential Energy

Employer

Essential Energy



Hailing from Cooma, Cameron recently completed his Certificate III in ESI - Distribution Overhead with Essential Energy. Having previously run a successful auto electrical business, Cameron chose to begin the next chapter of his vocational education journey, focusing on the evolving energy sector and its growing demand.

He is passionate about the industry's role in supporting critical services like first responders and hospitals, ensuring reliable power supply for the community.

On-site, Cameron is known for mentoring new apprentices, helping set the next generation of VET learners up for success. Despite initially fearing heights during safety induction exercises, he persevered, proving his resilience and determination.

Valued for his effective communication and ability to work safely in large teams, Cameron enjoys Essential Energy's family-like depot environment and builds lasting friendships with his TAFE cohort.

Cameron's dedication to helping others makes him a standout example of vocational education's positive impact now and in the future.

Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Angelique Madry



Qualification

Certificate III in Hairdressing

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Belinda's Hair Creations

Angelique Madry completed her hairdressing apprenticeship at Belinda's Hair Creations in Corrimal, marking a significant milestone in her professional journey. After leaving school at 16 to pursue a hands-on career, Angie chose TAFE NSW for its practical, visual approach, aligning with her lifelong passion for hairdressing.

Over three years, Angelique has transformed from a quiet, shy apprentice to a knowledgeable and confident stylist, earning the respect of peers and industry professionals, especially through her impressive achievements at WorldSkills. She finds great reward in putting smiles on clients' faces and creating a welcoming environment where people feel beautiful.

Inspired by her trainers and mentors, Angelique aspires to be a role model for others entering the industry. She uses social media to educate clients, share techniques, and promote the positive side of hairdressing.

Angelique's dedication, commitment, and drive make her an outstanding advocate for vocation education and the hairdressing industry.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Breanna Rigney

Qualification

Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

My Gateway

Host Employer

Heyday Group



Breanna Rigney has completed her apprenticeship, gaining her Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician demonstrating excellence in her field.

Breanna lets her skills speak for themselves, shifting perceptions in a male-dominated industry and paving the way for other women entering the trade.

Breanna consistently delivers high-quality results, earning respect as a leader and becoming the go-to person for advice and support within her team.

Breanna's journey highlights the importance of a "can-do" attitude combined with the practical foundation provided by VET training. While she faced challenges, especially adapting to the industry culture and navigating high expectations, she has embraced these as opportunities to learn and grow. The practical skills she gained have broadened her perspective, strengthened her communication, and enhanced her problem-solving abilities.

Breanna's story proves that progress is possible, supportive workplaces make a difference, and loving your job can lead to great outcomes in this vital industry.

Thank You



On behalf of the Illawarra & South East NSW Regional Training Awards team, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your generous support and involvement in this year's program and event. Your contribution played a vital role in celebrating the achievements of our region's outstanding VET learners, trainees, apprentices, employers, and training providers.

Your commitment to fostering excellence in vocational education and training inspires future generations and strengthens our local workforce. We are truly grateful for your support and look forward to continuing this important work together.

Thank you once again for helping make the Illawarra & South East NSW Training Awards a success.

